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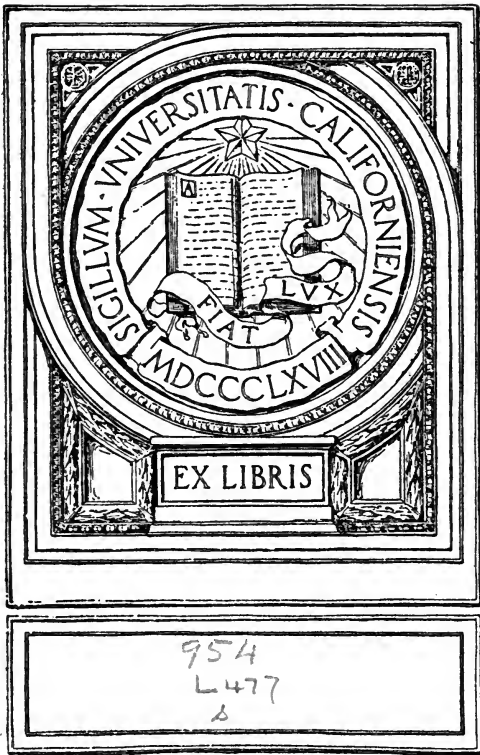


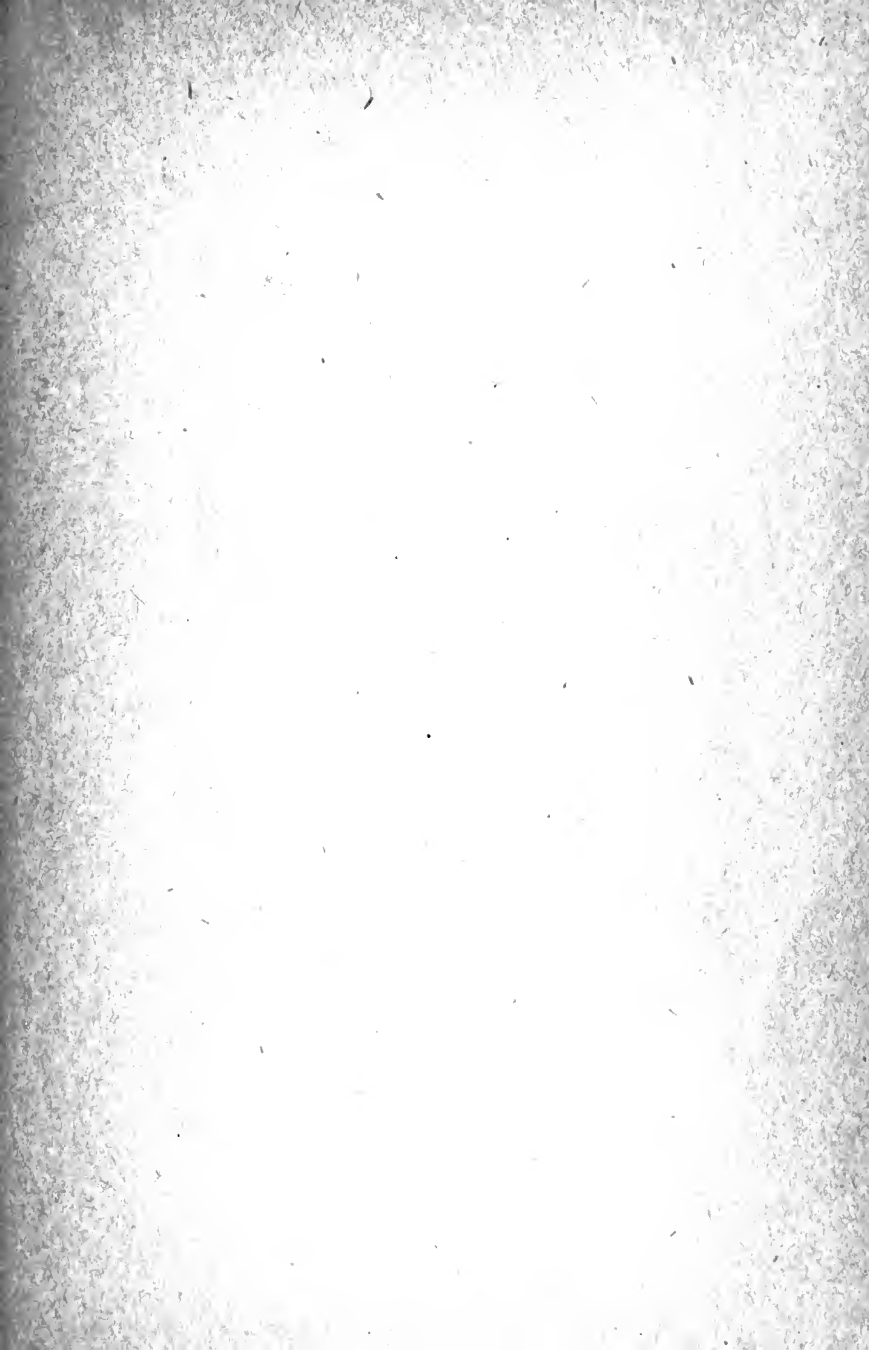
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THE SHARING

AGNES LEE

YB 74526





THE SHARING

BY
AGNES LEE



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For kind permission to reprint *The Sharing*, *The Silent House* and two lyrics thanks are due to The Editor of *Poetry*, and for other poems in this collection to the Editors of *The North American Review*, *Harper's Weekly*, *The Bookman*, *The Bellman*, *The Poetry Journal*, *The Youth's Companion*, *The Christian Register*, *Lippincott's*, *The Independent* and *The Lyric Year*.

A word as to *The Silent House*. I was sitting with my friend, J. I., before her hospitable fire. As the rain beat against the windows, she told me in a few words a day-dream she often had, of a soul seeking its lover through the storm. I urged her to write it into a story. But she never did, and when I referred to the subject afterward she would say: "No — you must make a poem of it sometime." About three years after her own gleaming soul had taken its way through the unknown, thoughts and lines began to take form in my mind, and *The Silent House* came to me.

A. L.

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THE SHARING

THE SHARING

Martin works in the garden. Stephana comes from the cottage door. Upon a bench under the eaves are ranged three very small wooden cages, of the sort used by bird-sellers for their stock in trade.

STEPHANA

At last a holiday! And my heart sings!
Come, father, take your leisure.
I brought the birds outside to preen their wings
And have a bit of pleasure.

MARTIN

Twelve sold within a week. And that is well.

STEPHANA

And these?

MARTIN [*Aside*]

She never tires
Of birds and birds! Whoever may foretell?
[*Aloud*]

STEPHANA

O, O, the silly buyers!—
I, keeping back my dearest three, and you
Praising, persuading, driving
Your bargain, all as if you never knew,
Yet in your soul conniving. [*They laugh*]

[*Sobriety*]

No more shall come to buy. And that's my
dream.

.

MARTIN

The sun is on the hedges.

STEPHANA

How all the little upward petals gleam!

MARTIN

Look, there, along the ledges,
Comes wandering a worn and meager man!
He's in the road. . . . He's turning!

STEPHANA

Perhaps a beggar from the caravan
That kept me from my churning.
We cannot heed so many passing here.

MARTIN

Now see him bend and falter
And shuffle in his gait. . . . Yet, coming near,
He seems to loom and alter. . . .
He is even young.

STEPHANA

No, no, his hair is gray . . .
He's reached the stile. . . . He's over.

.

MARTIN

He has a word for us. He walks our way
Across the field of clover. . . .
Where do you come from, melancholy guest?

THE STRANGER

Out of the dark of sorrow.
*They said it was the east, it was the west,
And there was no to-morrow.*

STEPHANA

The birds are fluttering.

THE STRANGER

Birds? Birds?

STEPHANA

O look,
The yellow, bright canaries!
They tide the dailiness of this dull nook.
They are my gentle fairies.
For father teaches at the village school,
And I'm forlorn and lonely
Except for these, my heartlings beautiful.
All would be happy . . . only . . .
When they begin to love me, off they go.

THE STRANGER

The price, the price, forever.

MARTIN

For all, the price is all the hand may show.
We may be fools, or clever,—
It is the earthly cry of everyone.

THE STRANGER

Poor birds! No songs embolden
Their little breasts. Their eyes forget the sun.

STEPHANA

But they are soft and golden.

THE STRANGER

The narrow cells!

STEPHANA

Yes, these are narrow homes.
But many are no wider.

THE STRANGER

His houses He has made with azure domes,
The bountiful Provider.

STEPHANA

Dread of my heart, the sign is on his brow!
He'll buy them. He increases
The twisted kerchief. On the settle now
Fall out his silver pieces!

MARTIN [*Whispering to Stephana*]
You'll have a bit of satin home to try.

THE STRANGER
The birds are bonny, bonny.
Take all I have — give me what it will buy.

STEPHANA
Father! Forego the money!

MARTIN
Now leave me to my bargain. You shall see —
You'll have a rosy fillet.

STEPHANA
Father!

MARTIN
Good stranger, they are yours, all three.

THE STRANGER
Mine. Nothing shall outwill it.

STEPHANA
But O, whatever is your good of them?

THE STRANGER
Why, look you, Blossom-Lady: —
Come, Yellow-Throat, come, Puff, and Speckle-
Gem,
Come, leave your dwellings shady!

*Hop, One,
Forth of your door.
Fearing no more,
Wing to the sun!*

*Hop, Two!
Sidle not so.
Hasten to know.
Summer is new.*

*Three, up!
Scatter the dim.
Fly to the rim
Of the sun's cup!*

*They are out and away
Over hedge, over hay.
Over hill, over stone
They have flashed, they have flown.
They have winged, they have won!
There is gold in the sun!*

.
MARTIN

Stop grieving, girl. Your tears are no amends.

. STEPHANA

Gone, gone, my sweet companions!

THE STRANGER

Freedom is worth the price of tears. Now,
friends,
I'm off to heights and canyons.

STEPHANA

Ah, they will die out yonder, far and high,
The sport of wind and shadow!

THE STRANGER

And that is where God's creatures ought to die.

MARTIN

Plague on his fine bravado!
And yet the birds were his. He paid the score.
Let the foolhardy ranger
Go follow them.

STEPHANA

Go! Go!— but not before
I have your *why*, dark stranger!

THE STRANGER

I was their fellow, in my cage apart,
Born of a world's blaspheming.
I served my term, without a dream at heart,
Save this one song of dreaming:

*If ever you shall be, man,
Where the leaves blow,
Make, as you go,
Fettered wings free, man!*

My cage was opened, and I left the blight
The weary darkness leavens.
But, free at last, I could not face the light,
Till I could share the heavens.

THE SILENT HOUSE

A late afternoon in autumn. The cottage living-room of a scholar. The windows at the back look through a wood to the waters of a wide lake. David is sitting before the fire, his head bowed low over a crumpled letter in his hand.

DAVID

How may a letter bring such darkness down!

[He reads from the letter]

Corinna dallies with your faith too long,

And my word is the word of all the town:

She has no soul, no soul, for all her song!

Why is it men like you would always mate

With little hearts that never comprehend?

*She may not take your measure nor your
weight,*

Yet holds you hers to harrow to the end.

You ask me if I see her. Many a night

For many an hour I've seen her. David, man,

I wish that you had watched her with my sight.

She led the dance, she led the caravan

Of arbiters who came to hear her sing.

Wine to her head was their too eager praise.

She circled round within a fiery ring,

And flashed the brighter out of every blaze.

But since the last bethronged levee, they say,

*Her doors have opened unto none. A chill,
Some whisper, some, that she has gone away.*

[With an impatient gesture he throws the letter into the fire, and watches it burn. A long pause. He looks up, musing.]

And empty is the house upon the hill.
O, it was there she found her quiet best!
Why will she never know it, and return
To one who calls her from her far unrest
To look on silver lake, on flower and fern?

[Dreamily]

O, for her nearness at the sunset's fire,
To walk with her beneath perpetual trees,
To share with her a stillness, to inspire
The ardour in her eyes no other sees!

MARTHA *[Entering with flowers]*

Sir, I have brought you flaming bergamot
And early asters for your window-sill.
And where I found them? Now you'll guess it
not.

I found them in the meadow by the hill,
And gathered till my arms could hold no more.

DAVID

The meadow of the little silent house!

MARTHA

The city lured her from her viny door.
But see, the flowers have stayed.

DAVID

They seem to drowse
And dream of one they lost, a paler-blown.

MARTHA

Then up I went, close by the house. The blinds
Are fast of late, and all are intergrown
With weedy havoc tossed by searching winds.

DAVID

How somber suddenly the sky! A shower
Is in the air.

MARTHA

I'll light the lamps.

DAVID

Not yet.
Leave me the beauty of the twilit hour.

MARTHA [*At the window*]

Hear the wind rising! How the moorings fret!
More than a simple shower is on its way.
I would not be aboard of yonder ship,
Hunted and hammered in the angry spray.

O look, O look, O see it turn and dip!
The helpless thing heads blindly on its course.
Now it goes plunging, half by water veiled.
Now it goes rearing, like a frightened horse.

DAVID

What craft is this, and from what harbour
sailed?

I can see figures.

MARTHA

Can you see a light?

DAVID

Now I see nothing. All is overcast.
Ah, many a ship must plow the wave to-night!

MARTHA

God help the ships, the ships! No light. No
mast.

A dim gray doom has swallowed up all space.
God save the ships, the ships, from the gale's
mark!

[*She goes out*]

DAVID

Corinna! Now I may recall her face.
It is my light to think by in the dark. . . .
Yes, all my years of study, all the will
Tenacious to achieve, the tempered strife,

The victories attained through patient skill,
Lie at the door of one dear human life.
And yet . . . the letter . . . O, to break a
spell
Wherein the stars are crumbling unto dust!
There never was a hope, I know it well,
And struggle on, and love because I must. . . .

Never a hope? Shall ever any scheme,
Her silence, or alarm of written word,
Or voiced asseveration, shake my dream?
She loves me. By love's anguish, I have heard!
We two from our soul-towers across a vale
Are calling each to each, alert, aware.
Shall one of us one day the other hail,
And no reply be borne upon the air?
Corinna, come to me, my power, my breath,
O come to me, Belovèd and Besought,
Over grief, gladness,— even over death!
For I could greet your phantom, so it brought
Love's own reality! . . .

[*There is a faint strain of song without. He
listens*]

A song of hers
Seems striving, striving, a faint villanelle
Half smothered by the gale's mad roisterers.
I heard her sing it once in Bracken Dell.

.

Here is the rain against the window beating
In heavy drops that presage wilder storm.
The lake is lost within a lurid sheeting.
The house upon the hill has changed its form.
The melancholy pine-trees weep in rocking.
And what's that clamour at the outer door?
Martha! O Martha! Somebody is knocking!

MARTHA [*Re-entering*]

You hear the rills that down the gutters roar.

DAVID

The door! I'll go myself. You're deaf to it.
[*Hurrying to the door*]
This is no night to leave a man outside.

MARTHA [*Muttering*]

And is it I am going deaf a bit,
And blind a bit, with other ill-betide!
Well, I can see to thread a needle, still,
And I can hear the ticking of the clock,
And I can fetch a basket from the mill.
But hallow me if ever I heard knock!

[*David has thrown open the door. He starts forward, stretching out his arms*]

DAVID

[*Coming back into the room, as if drawing someone with him*]

Corinna! You, Corinna! Drenched and cold!
At last, at last! But how in all the rain!
Martha!

[Martha stands motionless, unseeing]

Good Martha, you are growing old.

Draw fast the shades. Shut out the hurricane.
Here, take the dripping cloak out of the room.
Bring cordial from the purple damson pressed,
And light the lamps, the candles. Fire the
gloom.

Why do you mutter? Woman, here's a guest.

MARTHA

You opened wide the door. In came the storm.
But there was not a step upon the sill.
All the black night let in no living form.
I see no guest. Look hard, sir, as I will,
I see none here but you and my poor self.

DAVID

The room that was my mother's room prepare.
Spread out warm garments on the broad oak
shelf,—

Her gown, the little shawl she used to wear.

*[Martha, wide-eyed, bewildered, lights the
lamps and candles and goes out, raising her
hands]*

CORINNA

The moments I may tarry fade and press.
Something impelled me to you, some clear flame.
They said I had no soul, O David, yes,
They said I had no soul! And so I came.
I have been singing, singing all the way,
Singing since everywhere the darkness grew
And I grew chill and followed the small ray.
Lean close, and let my longing rest in you!

DAVID

Corinna, child, I never thought to win
Out of the silence and the futile throbbing.
How did you know the sorrow I was in?

CORINNA

A flock of leaves went sobbing, sobbing, sob-
bing.

DAVID

The dear old days, they have come back again.

CORINNA

They have come back to slip away forever.

DAVID

They have come back bearing some old, old pain
Mixed in a cup of joy. Now let us sever
The cup! At last let only happiness
Be import of the hour! You love me?

CORINNA

Dear,

I love you, love you.

DAVID

Little did we guess
Love would come back like this,— I, dreaming
here,
My heart a shaken storm,— the storm without
Shaken, shaken,— you, lightning of two storms.

CORINNA

O David, your long misery and doubt!

DAVID

They are the past. Let go the shadowy forms.

CORINNA

No,— show me all the shadows.

DAVID

At first, alone,
I went about lost in a haze of you.
Ah, nights there were with every hour a stone,
When my despair made nothing great seem
true!
But you would enter darkness like a dove.
I heard your voice, and I could make it say
The little words that bring the notes I love.

CORINNA

You felt me loving you.

DAVID

Then came the sway
Of other thoughts. How often we have read
How love relumes the flowers and the trees!
And all my world was newly garmented:
Rewards seemed slight, and slighter penalties.
Daily companionship was more and more.
To make one path of hope more viable,
To lift one load, was worth the heart's outpour.
And you, you had made all things wonderful.

CORINNA

I have come back to you.

DAVID

My love, my own,
My festival upleaping from an ember!
But, timid child, how could you come alone
Across the trackless woods?

CORINNA

Do you remember? —
Over the summer lake one starry, stilly,
Sweet night, when you and I were drifting,
 dear,
I frightened at the shadow of a lily!
It is all strange, but now I have no fear.

DAVID

And you, do you remember? — After we
Had pulled the boat ashore, with some new
 night

I held you close. By the moon I could see
Your lips were white with love. Now they are
 white.

But O, your eyes are weary! Sleep, then,
 sleep.

CORINNA

I must go over to the silent house.

DAVID

The dwelling stands forsaken up the steep,
With never beast nor human to arouse.

CORINNA

My house is waiting for me on the hill.
There in an upper room the rising sun
Shall see strange fingers plying, deft and still,
Drawing the thread in linen newly spun.
Soon shall the windows gleam with lamps. Now
 hark,
Hark,— heavy wheels are toiling to the north!

DAVID

I will go with you, child, into the dark.

CORINNA

Strong arms are in the storm to bear me forth.

DAVID

Not in these garments dripping as the trees!
Not in these clinging shadows!

CORINNA

Ah, good-night!

Dear love, dear love, I must go forth in these.
To-morrow you shall see me all in white.

A STATUE IN A GARDEN

I WAS a goddess ere the marble found me.
Wind, wind, delay not,
Waft my spirit where the laurel crowned me!
Will the wind stay not?

Then tarry, tarry, listen, little swallow,—
An old glory feeds me:
I lay upon the bosom of Apollo!
Not a bird heeds me.

For here the days are alien. O, to waken
Mine, mine, with calling!
But on my shoulders bare, like hopes forsaken,
The dead leaves are falling.

The sky is gray and full of unshed weeping,
As dim down the garden
I wait and watch the early autumn sweeping.
The stalks fade and harden.

The souls of all the flowers afar have rallied.
The trees, gaunt, appalling,
Attest the gloom, and on my shoulders pallid
The dead leaves are falling.

A ROMAN DOLL

(In a Museum)

How an image of paint and wood
Leaped to her life with a love's control,
Struck the chords of her motherhood,
Passionate little mother-soul!
Fair to her sight were the stolid eyes,
Dear to her toil the robes empearled.
She crooned it the ancient lullabies.
She gathered it close from the outer world.
They watched together as Nero's pyres
Fed the haze of a hundred fires.

*She bore me fresh on her fresh young arm.
See, I am small,
Only a doll.
But keeping her kiss I keep her charm.*

Long and lonely the toy has lain.
One by one into time's abyss
Years have dropped as the drops of rain.
Yet the cycles have left us this!
O red-lipped mother, O mother sweet,
To-day a sister has heard you call!
Your heart is beating in her heart-beat.
I saw her weep o'er the crumbling doll.
She knew, she knew. You had lived and smiled!
You had loved your dream, little Roman child!

*She bore me fresh on her fresh young arm.
See, I am small,
Only a doll.
But keeping her kiss I keep her charm.*

SONG OF A QUEEN OF LOMBARDY

*Only an hour, and his heart was beating.
Now he laughs in a ghostly sheeting,
Still in his dream the sin repeating.*

Sea, sea,
Quiet me.
Wash off my crown and my dress.
Throw the weight of your wave,
Cover me with forgetfulness
And let me sleep in my grave!

*This is the night the trees were shaken.
This is the night of the souls forsaken.
This is the night he shall not waken.*

Sea, sea,
Quiet me.
Cool of the infinite,
Over my forehead roll!
Bury my body's hands of white,
And the crimson hands of my soul!

THE LAST HOME

APART I lie, below the pulsing crowd,
In the last home at last.
Ah well, in the old days I have been proud!
Now meekness holds me fast.

I have been friend to potency and fame.
Fair coins my face enring.
Once to my hearth a lordly prætor came,
And once an Orient king.

They left their pearls upon my brow elate,
Their opals on my breast.
But now in my humility I wait
To house a meaner guest.

Then, little worm, come in, ere time dispraise
The perfect flower it bore.
Ah yes, I have been proud in the old days!
But I am proud no more.

THE LAKE WILL SING

How sweet within the dark to lie
And listen on the dune
When the lake's giant lullaby
Went leaping to the moon!

The winter with its icy rule
Enchained it fast and long.
The silver sleep was beautiful,
But O, there was no song!

Now spring has touched it to awake.
The sky, forever true,
Is calling down in blue. The lake
Is answering in blue.

The wavelets, gleaming choristers,
Come rallying in white.
The bond is rent, the balm recurs,
The lake will sing to-night!

THE DRUDGE

SOUL, what has her soul to say
At the fall of twilight's umber?
Solitude and workaday
And with all a little slumber.

In the house, yet of it not,
Never an existence sharing,
Given meekness for her lot,
Or a fee to be forbearing.

Bounded, sad and growing old,
By dim walls, a tile, a rafter,
Never to herself to hold
Any ray of the moon's laughter;

Never even time to know
Comfort of the Scythe, befriending,
Calling: "Dream and work I mow.
All shall have a level ending,—

"Stubble, stubble,—weed and grain,
Lily-pride and nettle-shadow,
All that ever shall remain,
Of the universal meadow.

"What avails it luck should cast
Little wage or wealth beholden?
Levelled stalks are all at last,
Martyr gray, Bacchantè golden!"

A CRY TO LANDECK

O SISTERS of Landeck, where flows the wild
river,
The turbulent river of sunshine and gloam,
Beseech our dear mother from grief to deliver
A heart that is weary for her and for home!
I long for my Tyrol, the land I love best,
And the roar of the rapids to lull me to rest.

I dream but of Landeck. And always in dream
A crystal that shone through her waters I clasp.
It was April, when flower and brake were
agleam,
Before the tall stranger came down from Ta-
rasp.
Now lost is the light of the crystalline star.
Despair is beside me. My Tyrol is far.

O do you not hear how I'm calling and calling?
Beseech our dear mother take one to her breast
Whose hour is past when the mad tears were
falling,
Whose eyes will not weep now, whose brain will
not rest.
My Tyrol! My Tyrol! It's there I could
weep,
With the roar of the rapids to lull me to sleep.

NUMBERS

Numbers are so much the measure of every thing that is valuable that it is not possible to demonstrate the success of any action or the prudence of any undertaking without them.

Steele, *Spectator*, No. 174.

IN all they brood,
The inexorable!
Out of primeval shadow have they stood
In judgment over all.
They brook not, these,
Earth's gainsay, nor the sea's,
Arbiters of our more, our less,
Our nothingness.

Apart, a few,
They merge, divide,
Or, gathering in multitudes anew
Spread forth in armies wide.
Their ancient law
Still rules a world of awe,
Bids science halt or onward fare,
Bids art beware.

Fact's own they are,
Yet, counselling dream,
Bright wings for thought's invasion of
 a star,
Fins for the diver's gleam,

Unerring eyes
To pierce the mysteries
Bedded within the rocky core
Of mountains hoar.

With lamps upheld,
Austere and strong
They wait behind the Muses. Sun-im-
pelled
Apollo their fleet throng
Never outruns.
They guard a million suns!—
Mindful to mould a sapling's grace,
A lily's face.

They forge the curse
Of ways unlit.
They are the heartbreak of the universe.
They are the joy of it.
Unseeing we pass
Their pattern in the grass.
But we are theirs, and they defy
Eternity.

THE PROTEST

SHE thought the world was weary-old.
She thought that she was young.
The tale of April was retold
On every violet's tongue.
And yet, amid the rushing by,
The comrades she had known
Were seldom, and she wondered why,
Sitting at dusk, alone.

“I'm young!” she said. “But all is cold.
The world has grown so weary-old.”

The children told of bird and croft
More loudly, at her ear.
Once she had heard a whisper soft!
But she could only hear
The harshness of the effort, now,
That hid the love behind,
And went her way, and wondered how
The world had grown less kind.

It came to pass, it came to pass:
Ah! Someone looked into the glass.

Her soul was drenched in tears to trace
(She thought that she was young)
Her very form, her very face,

But in a veil that clung,—
The filaments of time and care!
The colours, where were they?
She saw dim eyes and faded hair
And freshness fallen away.

“It was not I!” she said. “Alas,
Who was it looked into the glass?”

A LEGEND OF THE LAKE

THE air was luminous and soft,
The fleecy clouds were high aloft.

A score of women, so they tell,
Chatted and laughed before night fell.

Out in a boat that grounded lay
Louise had toiled the livelong day,

Giving them back no laugh again,
Sewing the sails for the fishermen.

Beside her was her little boy,
Dandling a painted wooden toy.

And all the day as she sewed she sang —
Over the pebbles the cadence rang: —

Needle and pall, needle and pall.
These are the dream and the end of all.

The women felt the gathering gales.
They called: "Louise! Come leave your
sails!

"Up with your child, and hurry along!
Hark! Will you never hush your song?"

She heard, and called: "What coward flees
Before a little summer breeze?"

"Come in, come in," the women cried,
"O see the clouds! How dark they ride!"

"Then run," she cried. "Who fears may go.
I've still a long, long seam to sew!"

They called: "Quick, for your child's sweet
sake!
There's a new madness in the lake!"

Called she: "Though demons dark the sun,
I'll stay and see my task well done!"

The wind bore down with mocks and moans.
But a voice rang clear, across the stones:

Needle and pall, needle and pall.
And Caspar kissed his wooden doll.

Then up there leaped the billows hoar,
And lashed the boat from the sandy shore.

And Caspar's laughter wildly broke.
He thought it was a merry joke,

As on and on they drifted out,
Till rain-sheets curtained them about.

Ah, none shall fair Louise forget!
The fishers sought, are seeking yet,

While many a tale their tongues aver:
They say a cloud upgathered her;

They say the waters whelmed her down
Straight outward of her native town;

They say that on a shore afar
She sews her sails where the dim folk are,

Where little Caspar silently
Dandles a doll upon his knee;

They say that sometimes from somewhere
A song goes faintly on the air:

Needle and pall, needle and pall.
These are the dream and the end of all.

ON THE JAIL STEPS

I'VE won the race.
Young man, I'm new.
Old Sallow-face,
Good luck to you!

I've turned about,
And paid for sin.
And you come out
As I go in.

Ten years! But mark,
I am free, free!
Ten years of dark
Shall gather me.

My wife! Long-while
She wept her pain.
There is no smile.
She weeps again.

My little one
Shall know my call.
Child is there none,
For sin grows tall.

Now who are you,
Spar of hell's flood?
And who, and who,
But your own blood?

HER GOING

THE WIFE

CHILD, why do you linger beside her portal?
None shall hear you now if you knock or
clamour.

All is dark, hidden in heaviest leafage.
None shall behold you.

TRUTH

Gone, alas, the dear, the beautiful lady!
I, her comrade, tarry but to lament her.
Ah, the day she vanished did all things lovely
Share in her fleetness!
Tell me her going.

THE WIFE

You are a child. How tell you?

TRUTH

Child I am, yet old as the earliest sorrow.
Talk to me as you would to an old, old woman.
Mine are the ages.

THE WIFE

Voices, they say, gossiped around her dwelling.
She awoke, departing, they say, in silence.
Glad I am she is gone. The old hurt fastens.
Hate is upon me.

Hard it was to live down the day, and wonder,
Wonder why the tears were forever welling,
Wonder if on his lips her kiss I tasted,
Turning to claim him.

TRUTH

Jealousy, mad, brooding blind and unfettered,
Takes its terrible leap over lie and malice.
Who shall question her now in the land of
shadow?
Who shall uphold her?

THE WIFE

Hard it was to know that peace had forsaken
All my house, to greet with a dull endeavour
Babe or book, so to forget a moment
I was forgotten.

TRUTH

Who shall question her now in the land of
shadow,
Question the mute pale lips, and the marble fin-
gers,
Eyelids fallen on eyes grown dim as the autumn?
Ah, the belovèd!

THE WIFE

Go, go, bringer of ache and discord!

TRUTH

Go I may not. Some, they think to inter me.
Out of the mould and clay my visible raiment
Rises forever.

THE WIFE

Hers the sin that lured the light from our
threshold.
Hers the sin that I lost his love and grew bitter.

TRUTH

Lost his love? You never possessed it, woman.

THE WIFE

Sharp tongue, have pity! . . .

Yes, I knew. But I loved him, hoping for all.
I said in my heart: "Time shall bring buds
to blossom."

Almost I saw the flower of the flame descending.
Then — she came toying.

He is mine, mine, by the laws of the ages!
Mine, mine, mine, yes, body and spirit!
Glad I am she has gone her way to the shadow.
Hate is upon me.

O, the bar over which my soul would see
All that eludes my soul, while he remembers!
You, dispel if you can my avenging passion,—
Clouds are before me!

A PEASANT OF ASSISI

THE sun that traced of old the Umbrian Friars
Hung saffron in the mist of eventide.
The Angelus from a far tower had told
Its rosary of sounds and silences.
I wandered where the purple winding valley,
Steeped in a bloom of seven hundred years,
Still breathes so gently of Assisi's power
That I, to-day's deserter, went half watchful
At any little turning of a hill
To come upon the hooded Saint himself
In some sweet colloquy with bird or beast.
O purple winding valley, saffron sun
And silver thoughts! And now, at the path's
edge,
Outgleaming from a shadow, rose a shrine,
Beneath whose ancient ark a streamlet ran
Along a dip of moss-enamelled stones.
Within a field a tawny peasant youth
Stood leaning on his hoe, content from toil.
And at my beck he dropped his hoe and has-
tened.
And, as I questioned of the place, his eyes
Grew soft, his answer coming clear, and eager
With repetition of the names he loved.

THE LEGEND

Lady, hither to this nook one noonday
Blessèd Francis walked with Brother Leo.

All the sky was fire that scorched the flowers.
Brother Leo lagged behind, entreating:
“O I am forspent! O find me water!
Verily my thirst has overtried me!”
But the land was parched and stream-forsaken,
And upon the ground the weary-hearted
Sank, and soon a slumber overcame him.
Blessèd Francis, kneeling in the grasses,
Prayed a silent prayer for water, water,—
Crystal water, silver, laughing water,
Water that should be to faith a signal.
And at last the weary Brother wakened,
And they rose together, looking downward.
At their feet amid the stones upwelling
Crystal water bubbled, laughed and sparkled.
And the freshness to their lips they gathered.
And they went their way with praising pulses.

Here the shrine was set to mark the story.
Honoured is my simple tongue to tell it.
All is true. For, lady, look: The Water!

FOREST FIRES

*O mother, I cannot sleep to-night,
For the air blows thick from the dune.
And through my window a glaring fright
Peeps the blood-red face of the moon!*

Far from our village, little lad,
The forest fires are raging.
The fire-king hastens hard and mad,
His furious battle waging.

His doomful breath has every town,
As through the distant mazes
Of woodland green he rushes down,
And scorches black the daisies.

He gathers little homes and mills.
He beats apart the bridges,
And leaps the streams and climbs the hills
And flames the mountain-ridges.

Tall in the land sweet hosts of pines
Are flanking close to daunt him.
But he shall mow their million lines,
And onward still shall vaunt him.

All beauty smites he with his hand,
Himself its last beholder.
Twice twenty miles of timberland
Upon his pathway smoulder.

*Look, mother, the world seems thirsting so!
The day and the night are one.
And over the gables leaning low
The moon is as red as the sun!*

*But I'll draw together my curtains dark,
And back in my bed again
I'll pray me asleep, or, waking, hark
For the sound of the conquering rain.*

THE OLD IROQUOIS

(Now the Colonial Theatre)

By a new name they call the house to-day.
The balconies of blood are gilded o'er.
Tardy Precaution writes upon the curtain
And lights a beacon-lamp at every door.

Where are we? Who has told us all these
things
Dreaming within us, till we know and see?
This is the Iroquois, the house of death.
Here echoed one united agony,
Muted how suddenly in char and ember,
Here, in this very place. The walls remember.

And bright the revel, now, and loud the laugh-
ter.

*But what is yonder swaying, faltering host?
Shall this gay vault give mirth alone hereafter?
No! — Hark, the sobbing of a little ghost!*

House evermore to darken thought of man,
Let some stern Azrael above your portal
Attest the sacrifice! Through all your aisles
Let stanzas ring, born sounding and immor-
tal! —

Ah, not the strident slang, the castanets!
Ah, not the long cheap laughter that forgets!

DICKENS

A TRIBUTE

Who is the little quiet London drudge
Plodding at eve through mist and misery,
Warming his heart at the world's flickering
fire?

Who is the young recording wanderer,
Threading, at some rare hour of liberty,
The dim and narrow windings of the town,
Where men and women pass and go their ways,
Unconscious pictures of an art to be,
And heeding not the ever heedful boy?

It is one living in our midst to-day,
If heaven accord us worthiness to know
The radiant spirit shining at our threshold,
Spirit immortal, childlike, of a man
Who won the world with laughter and with
tears,
Whose pen, a sounding arrow, pierced the core
Of evil and awoke a race from slumber
To look with seeing eyes upon oppression.

Strong to draw healing from the haunts of pain,
Out of the festering dark of circumstance
He freed the little unextinguished lights.
Brave to find beauty's form in all, he spied
The blade of grass between the grimy cobbles.

His home the crowded street, the intricate by-
way,
Where he might lose or gain his fancy's crea-
tures,
His soul went forth, and, filled with plot and
plan
And weft of dreams that waited to be woven,
Sought life's enigma, knew the subtle charm
That lingers in a melancholy stair
Forgotten feet have pressed, a mouldering wall,
A window touched by myriad unseen hands.

Humanity was knocking at his heart.
He flung it wide and showed the waiting store:
A brook for sorrow's thirst, a loaf for hunger,
A flowering staff for honour's deep emprise.
Attuning every note to life's one music,
Whether a tremulous delight, or sound
Of minted coin that falls upon the granite,
He wrought in kingly power to achieve
Triumph of mercy and defeat of malice.
Dear master, still he lives, who laid his hand
With such a tenderness upon his time,
He lives, with kindly ridicule and love
To fight the buzzing fads of this our day
And feed the sacred amphora of truth!

The pageant moves. The pictures are un-
blurred.

How in a chain of changes they survive!—

For, while humanity endures, the past
Confronts us with the types of what we are.
The pageant moves. We watch the forms go
by,
And know them every one, the bright, the
weary,
Sun in the shadow, shadow in the sun.

Ah! well are we whom solitude may bring
To dwell within the living page, or we
Who in the throb of some vast audience
Are gathered to the glowing heart of genius,
Genius whose wide hope led to heights afar,
Whereof the song of fame was not life's all,
Nor death but the applause that cuts a cadence.

WAGNER

IN dull content
The pallid lords in pallid houses pent
Heard not, for they were deaf, nor felt the sun,
Doors being none and windows being none,
While he the edge of sham and envy braved,
To rescue art from idols that enslaved.

And through the dim
Came barges floating on the air to him.
In trailing robes, with jewelled glint and gleam,
One after one the Northland guests of dream
Set foot upon the stairway of his soul,
Bearing the lamp, the cup, the runic scroll.

Time's brooding nurse,
He caught the clamour of the universe,
The flower of life's inmost thought and plan,
The love of woman, and the caravan
Of things forever sought and never found,
Till all the myth of man awoke in sound.

High o'er the rills
Flashes his temple from Bavarian hills.
Green of the staff, gold of the fiery song,—
Deep was the darkness, deep and over long.
But certain was the light. How could he fail,
Who held within his hand the holy grail?

TO A POET

HE who leaves a glimmer of his soul
In a bit of marble, in a song,
He shall win the unseen aureole
Set above the stars the ages long,
And the fleeting import of his days
Echoes of eternity shall praise.

We of earth your mastery would hail,
Iron hand that shook the gates of art,
Crumpled rock to ridge's flowering trail,
Yours, O feet that, following no chart,
Found a future, or in spaces free
Walked the winding floor of some old sea.

Poet of life's ordinances deep,—
Cities lying restless in the night,
Tossed and racked before they fall asleep,—
Meadow-streams in peace of pale moonlight,
We, the tossing city, we, the stream,
Share your noble heritage of dream.

THE SPIRIT OF A CHILD

WHEN the morning broke
Once the Child awoke,
For the sun was on His breast —
Such a little breast to hold
Heaven's kingdom! In His nest
Lay His treasures manifold:
 Rubies, miniver,
 Frankincense and myrrh,
And an ocean's burnished shell.
And His mother smiled to see
All prophetic Israel
Mirrored in His royalty.

Warm, in winter wild
Slumbered once the Child.
And His dream, surpassing all,
Measured not of any time,
Was of roses mystical,
And of lilies blown sublime,
 Roses rising fair!
 Lilies white as prayer!
Ah! Humanity well knows
Of the garden and the gleam,
And its consolation grows
From the fragrance of the dream.

So a Little Boy
By His gift and toy

Woke and slept and woke again,
As our children sleep and wake,
And, without the manger, men
Passed with sorrow and heartbreak,
 Weary, sad of brow,
 Even then, as now.
Now, as then, repose is bought
On a clamorous highway.
Everywhere some Herod thought
Seeks an infant truth to slay.

Still at the soul's gate
Thirst and hunger wait.
Christmas dawn shall stay our tears!
Still a host of sorrows mass
At our doors. And through the years
How they pass, and knock, and pass!
 Near the Child that day
 Something unseen lay,
Christmas dawn remembereth!
'Twas a crown of thorns foretold,
By the dews of pain and death
Changed into a crown of gold.

Soul, your blossoms bring!
Deck you for the King!
Sea and mountain, leap elate,
Knowing, symbols from afar,
One was born to conquer fate,
Born beneath an Eastern star.

And His realm is love,
And His lamp a dove.
War, let arrows rest unfired!
Peace, let pennons be unfurled!
For the Spirit of a Child
Is the wonder of the world.

CHRISTMAS VOICES

THE daylight was a frozen thing.

The way was long.

A little child came carolling

A Christmas song.

“Child, sing no more of byre and cot,”

The woman said.

“Your song is old. The world needs not

A story dead.

“I seek new countries, leagues away.

Now sing of them.

The roads are leading far to-day

From Bethlehem.”

No carol stirred. The child had passed.

She hurried on.

Her step was weary at the last,

With daylight gone.

Then down the dark and through the cold

A radiance sprang.

She heard another voice. Behold,

An angel sang:

“O woman, you must falter much,

And travel far,

To free your spirit from the touch

Of wing and star!”

CLOUD AND FLOWER

I SAW the giant stalking to the sky,
The giant cloud above the wilderness,
Bearing a mystery too far, too high,
For my poor guess.

Away I turned me, sighing: "I must seek
In lowlier places for the wonder-word.
Something more little, intimate, shall speak."

A bright rose stirred.

And long I looked into its face, to see
At last some hidden import of the hour.

.
And I had thought to turn from mystery —
But O, flower! flower!

THE SECRET

WILD sea, forever far your secret slips!
I asked the rocks your story to rehearse,
The rocks, that chronicle the universe,
To tell me of the hidden power that whips
Your vortices, and dooms the iron ships.
But still your baffling mystery they nurse,
For you were swift their silence to coerce
With a great wave that covered up their lips.

And still I marvel at your mastery.
What is the end to which your moaning makes?
What are the ages slow to change apart?
Or are you helpless, ignorant as I,
A little lonely child, who dreams and wakes
And hears the lonely beat of your loud heart?

TO A GARRULOUS FRIEND

Do not answer every lure.
Learn of one forever sure,
Winning through the sun or fog,
Time, the hoary pedagogue,

Time eternally discreet,
Watchful of the moments fleet.
For the long years teach us well
What to hide and what to tell.

Lavish words upon a day
Fed your inmost soul away.
It was broken for a feast.
It was measured to the beast.

Guard you from the over-glow.
Be contented to forego.
Leave the sound to him who strays,
Too enamoured of the phrase.

Wistful of the silent word
In a thought unguessed, unheard,
Greet the world in strength sublime
And the reticence of Time.

A SONG OF TIME

WOMAN, why are your eyes so wide,
Gazing far where the dunes divide?
*Because to-morrow is not to-day,
And the king rideth away.*

Woman, where is the bloom you bore?
*Caught in hand as he passed my door.
And my work and I are growing gray,
And the king rideth away.*

*For he is king of the dune and lea,
And he never will stop to hearten me.
The dust rolls high, and the clouds roll gray,
And the king rideth away.*

TWO HOUSES

HOUSE of the past, house of the sunken stair,
In somnolence of long untrodden grass!
Tragedy, pleasure, sin have crossed your door.
Your crumbling gables are no longer fair,
And all the sigh of all the heaven may pass
 Along your desert floor.

And you, the newly-built, firmly set,
Wide-halled, with gleaming porch and peri-
 style,
And windows clear to catch the sunlight's dole!
What shall you say, O house of no regret,
Proud in your vigour, but, alas the while,
 Still waiting for your soul!

THE LOST RITUAL

BEAUTY still wings from a star.
Art struggles on through the cost.
Ah, but the form is afar,
And the line's ritual is lost!

Haply when havoc shall cease,
And the long void of the day,
We shall go back unto Greece,
Raise up a statue, and pray.

LOVE'S VOICE

“DREAMER!” we cry to Love, who Love forego,
Who walk our ways, nor catch an infinite gleam,
Nor hear a voice through darkness calling:

“No,
Not I the dreamer! Yours the empty dream!”

RADIUM

A FATEFUL youngling of the dark and drift,
Unconscious of its goal,
But giving, giving, eager with the gift,
Exhaustless as the soul.

RESEARCH

ALONE, afar from mortal loves and hates,
Pre-dating creed and church,
Stands Truth, the secret marble that awaits
The chiselling hand, Research.

VICTORY*

I PASSED her bed of cyclamen,
And swifter hurried, passing it.
I could not say *God bless her*, then,
Lest God should guess me hypocrite.

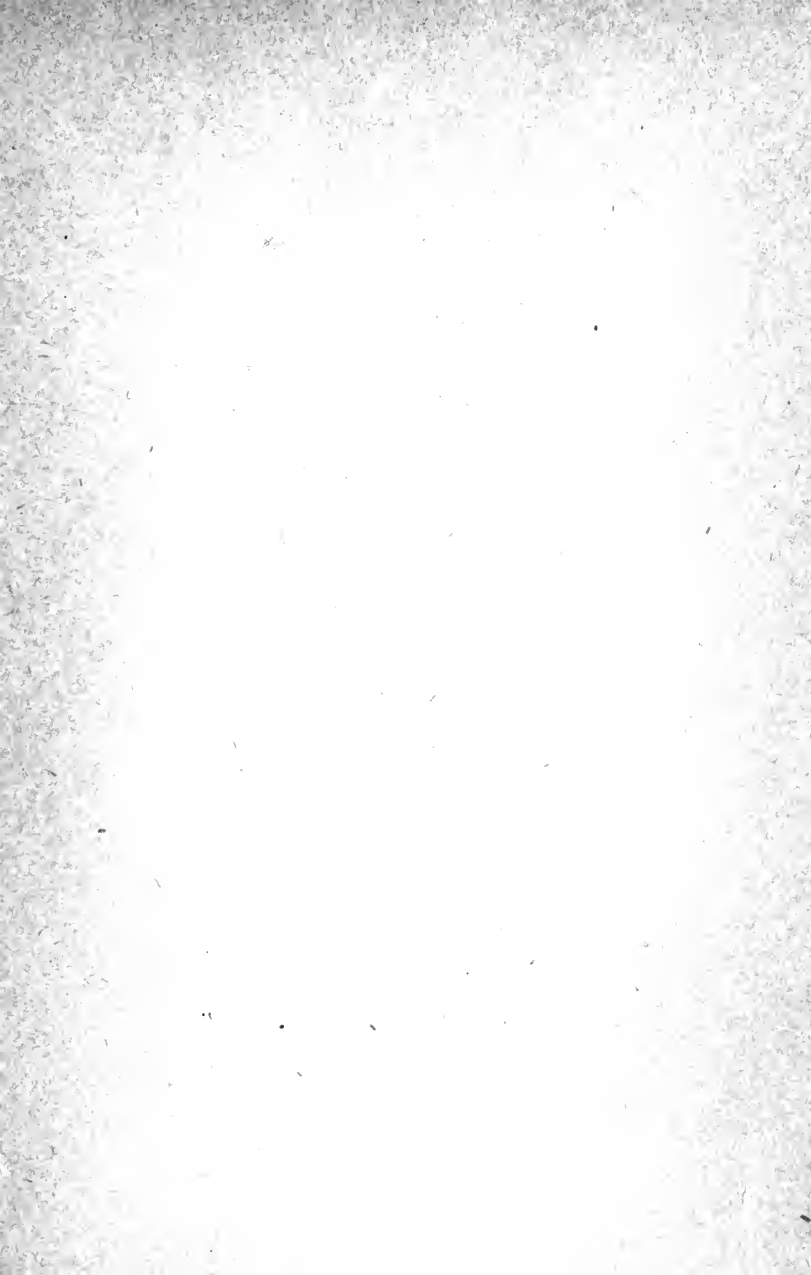
God bless her! I have said the thought.
The fragrant crown is on her head.
The golden steeple-bells have wrought
Their gladdest. She is gone to wed.

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THE
SONG

Love glided room to room,
Wistful with flower and flame.
And the dial forgot
In a tangle of bloom.
But we never knew his name.

Love poured us music's vow
More sweet than viola's.
But we cherished him not
As we cherish him now,
When we know what his dear name was.



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